

Pesticide Safety Alert

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing this alert to its state and tribal partners to recommend increased vigilance of residential pesticide applications, especially fumigants and restricted use pesticides. We also recommend increased emphasis on the importance of reading and following label requirements during pesticide certification and training programs.

This alert is being issued following the misuse of a methyl bromide fumigant in a manner inconsistent with its label, in violation of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act. The misuse of methyl bromide resulted in the apparent pesticide poisoning suffered by a family of four visiting in St. John, USVI in March 2015. Methyl bromide is a restricted use pesticide and is not approved for indoor residential uses.

According to its Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), methyl bromide is an odorless, colorless gas. It is highly toxic and may be fatal if inhaled. It may cause respiratory distress, cardiac arrest, and nervous system effects. It may cause blurred vision or burns or external ulcers to skin. Long term exposure may cause effects in the following: peripheral nervous system disorders, central nervous system, respiratory system, and heart. Based on an epidemiology study, methyl bromide may be associated with an increase in prostate cancer risk in both private and commercial pesticide applicators. In vitro tests showed mutagenic effects. Symptoms of overexposure may be delayed and include dizziness, blurred vision, fatigue, weakness, staggering gait, slurred speech, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, loss of muscle coordination. Effects of breathing high concentrations may include convulsions and lung damage.

Methyl bromide is approved for limited use as a soil fumigant. It is also used for post-harvest treatment of commodities and for structural fumigation (non-residential).

All applicators and distributors of methyl bromide are subject to the reporting and recordkeeping requirements of Title VI of the Clean Air Act (CAA). These record keeping and reporting requirements can be found at

<http://www.epa.gov/ozone/record/mbr.html>.

EPA Responds to Incident that Leaves Four People Ill on St. John

EPA Working with U.S. Virgin Islands Government on Ongoing Investigation

The EPA is working closely with the U.S. Virgin Islands government to investigate an incident reported to the U.S. Virgin Islands government and EPA on March 20, 2015. Paramedics responded to a call that a family of four staying in Cruz Bay, St. John became very ill. Family members were subsequently hospitalized. The EPA is looking into whether the family was made ill by a pesticide called methyl bromide, which was used by Terminix to fumigate a unit at the resort on March 18, 2015. The use of methyl bromide in the U.S. is restricted due to its acute toxicity. Only certified applicators are allowed to use it and it is not authorized for indoor residential use. Health effects of acute exposure to methyl bromide are serious and include central nervous system and respiratory system damage. The EPA is continuing to work with the U.S. Virgin Islands government and others to gather information and will ensure that appropriate steps are taken to deter any additional misuse of this pesticide.